

Are You In Danger of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?

consumer**brief**

You can't see or smell carbon monoxide, but high levels of it can kill you in minutes and hundreds of people die from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning each year.

CO is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If appliances that burn fuel are properly maintained, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. However, if appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of CO can result.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CO POISONING?

Low levels can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea or mild headaches.

At moderate levels, you may get a severe headache, become dizzy, mentally confused, nauseated or you may faint.

Since many of the symptoms are similar to those of the flu or other illnesses, you may not think that CO poisoning is the cause.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT MY SYMPTOMS ARE FROM CO POISONING?

- Get fresh air immediately. Open doors and windows and leave the house.
- Go to an emergency room and tell the physician you suspect that you are suffering from CO poisoning. If CO poisoning has occurred, it can often be diagnosed by a blood test if it is done soon after exposure.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CO DETECTOR GOES OFF?

Check to see if any member of the household is experiencing symptoms of poisoning.

If no one is experiencing symptoms, ventilate your home with fresh air and turn off all potential sources of CO - your oil or gas furnace, your gas water heater, gas range and oven, gas dryer, gas or kerosene space heater and any vehicle or small engine.

Have a qualified technician inspect your fuel-burning appliances and chimneys to make sure that they are operating correctly.

CONSUMER TIPS:

- Purchase a carbon monoxide detector and use it. A detector should be placed on every floor in your home to provide the best protection.
- At the beginning of every heating season, have your fuel burning appliances checked by a qualified technician.
- Choose appliances that vent fumes to the outside whenever possible.
- Do not idle your car in the garage - fumes can build up very quickly.
- Do not use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Do not sleep in any room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.
- Never use a charcoal grill indoors - even in the fireplace.

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